
To: Real Estate Department Partners

Notice: **RED-21-49**

From: Real Estate Department

Date: October 14, 2021

Re: **Fire Safety Week 2021**

Fire Prevention Week was October 3-10 this year, so yes, it is time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors again.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that:

- About 1/3 of home fires and deaths happen in the months of December, January and February.
- Cooking continues to be the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries.
- The kitchen is the leading area of origin for home fires. However, bedrooms and living/family rooms are the leading areas of origin for home fire deaths.
- Smoking materials caused one of every four home fire deaths.

Smoke Detectors and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home structure fires in half. When smoke alarms fail it is most often because of missing, disconnected, or dead batteries.

Nuisance activations were the leading cause of disabled smoke alarms. Smoke detectors should be replaced after a 10-year service, as the sensors are no longer effective after 10-years. For smokers who smoke in their home, the service life is shortened, and detectors should be replaced much sooner than 10-years.

When replacing 9-volt batteries do not discard them before covering the contacts with electrical tape. The contacts on top of the 9-volt batteries can come into contact with metallic objects in the trash and start fires if enough heat is generated. Even old batteries have enough charge left in them to start a fire.

Additionally, having Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detectors will provide a faster response time than just having the traditional ionization type smoke detector. Some people think that they do not need a CO detector because they do not have gas appliances in their homes, but this is a misconception of the operation of CO detectors. CO detectors detect CO in anything that burns, and have a four minute response time, where ionization smoke detectors take as long as 40 minutes before sending an alarm that a fire has occurred.

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The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that:

- Smoke alarms that are properly installed and maintained play a vital role in reducing fire deaths and injuries. Having a working smoke alarm cuts the chances of dying in a reported fire in half.
- No smoke alarms were present in 40% of home fire deaths.

In Indiana it is against the law to disable or tamper with smoke detectors except when necessary for maintenance purposes. Smoke Detector Violations include the possibility of being charged with a Class A, B, or C infraction, or a Class D Felony. Reference Indiana Code IC 22-11-18-5. Smoke detector violations are indeed a serious offense. Smoke detectors save lives and Indiana Laws require them to be in place, operational, and maintained.

Please change those smoke detector batteries and enjoy peace of mind that you have raised the level of safety in your home for another year.

Preventing Kitchen Fires

"Prevent Kitchen Fires" is the NFPA message for Fire Prevention Week this year. Kitchen fires (unattended cooking) are the leading cause of residential home fires & on average, the NFPA reports that, there are roughly 3,000 home fires per day caused by kitchen fire in the U.S. Water should never be used on a grease fire. Some believe that flour can be poured onto the flames to extinguish the fire, but flour will burn and should never be used for this purpose. Fire extinguishers designed specifically for grease fires may be used- the ABC type fire extinguisher will do the job for kitchen fires & most household fires. In using a fire extinguisher, always point the spray at the base of the fire for best results. Move back about six feet from the fire so the pressure from the extinguisher discharge does not blow grease out of the pan.

The best defense for kitchen fires is to always be within sight of cooking and to have range hood fire suppressors or a kitchen fire blanket that is rated for kitchen fires. Kitchen blankets can be used to smother the fire without the worries of causing the fire to be blown out of the pan by a fire extinguisher.

Escape Routes

Everyone should ensure that they have two escape routes from their homes. Bedroom windows serve as emergency escape & rescue openings, and we need to ensure that these windows are operable and not blocked. Checking operable windows is recommended during fire safety week.

Corrugated Steel Tubing

Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing (CSST) flexible gas line connectors connected to appliances that vibrate while running break down with stress fractures and develop leaks or ruptures over time due to vibrations created by clothes dryers and HVAC connections.

It would be best to replace them with a flexible gas connector that contains an Excess Flow Valve (EFV) that will stop the flow of fuel gas when it detects excessive flow, such as a gas line rupture.

Questions about fire safety

Please refer questions about fire safety to Doug Newport via dnewport@ihcda.in.gov.